

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW
OF
DUKE SIOZON**

**38 PAGES
(INCLUDING COVER)**

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

 In the Matter of: *
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 FIRE ON BOARD THE *
 U.S. PASSENGER VESSEL *
 PORT IMPERIAL MANHATTAN *
 NOVEMBER 17, 2000 *

Monday,
 November 20, 2000

INTERVIEW OF:

DUKE SIOZON

This interview was conducted by Donald J. Tyrrell,
 Investigator-in-Charge, National Transportation Safety Board,
 Office of Marine Safety, 490 L'Enfant Plaza East, Washington,
 D.C. 20594.

Other Persons Present

In addition to the person being interviewed, the following
 individuals were also present during the interview:

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1 PROCEEDINGS

2 MR. TYRRELL: Today is Monday, November 20th.

3 My name is Don Tyrrell and I am interviewing the
4 Captain and your name, Captain, is Duke --

5 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Duke Siozon, that is
6 S-I-O-Z-O-N.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Say that again, please.

8 CAPTAIN SIOZON: S-I-O-Z-O-N.

9 MR. TYRRELL: O-N, okay.

10 And is Duke your proper first name?

11 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And how old are you?

13 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I am 30.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Thirty.

15 I am going to ask you some, just some
16 background information and questions first, as to get
17 an idea of your sea going experience, and employment
18 history and that sort of thing.

19 How long have you been working on the marine
20 vessels?

21 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I would say since '94, about
22 six years.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And your current
24 position is?

25 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Captain.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Captain of the Manhattan?

2 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

3 MR. TYRRELL: How long have you been the
4 captain of the Manhattan?

5 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Well, when I first got my
6 promotion, which was back in May, that was my first
7 boat. I have been the captain of that boat for about a
8 month and a half, maybe. Then we have to, we have a
9 new bid and I have a new run. Originally I just got
10 back in that boat about two months.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So, you have been on the
12 Manhattan for the last two months steady?

13 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Right.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Before this two month
15 period, what were you doing?

16 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I was running different
17 boats. I had the shuttle boats that we have, different
18 runs.

19 MR. TYRRELL: You were kind of like a fill-in
20 sort of master?

21 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I had my regular shift,
22 regular runs, but I am not running the Manhattan boats,
23 the Manhattan boats only run for the week in Harbor --,
24 which is a permanent vessel.

25 MR. TYRRELL: I don't think I understood that.

1 Could you say that again?

2 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Well, before I run the
3 Manhattan, before this boat came up, I had not a bid,
4 which is basically I was doing the harbor side, mid
5 town, which is a different boat, it is a shuttle boat.

6 And the weekends I am doing the midtown runs, which is
7 basically pretty much the same as the Manhattan boat.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Do you have a license?

9 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, I do.

10 MR. TYRRELL: What license to you hold?

11 CAPTAIN SIOZON: One hundred ton, near
12 coastal.

13 MR. TYRRELL: One hundred ton, near coastal.

14 CAPTAIN SIOZON: And I do have my AB, too,
15 able bodied seaman.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Is that unlimited AB?

17 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

18 MR. TYRRELL: Did you sail as an AB?

19 CAPTAIN SIOZON: No.

20 MR. TYRRELL: How long have you had the
21 license?

22 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Captain's?

23 MR. TYRRELL: Yes.

24 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I got it like, I believe '98,
25 May. I am not quite sure, I would have to check my --

1 (Pause.)

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: June '99.

3 CAPTAIN SIOZON: June '99, okay. That might
4 be my AB license that I got in '98.

5 MR. TYRRELL: You think you got the license in
6 June '99.

7 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yeah, I got a serial number,
8 but then again -- But, that is the first issuance.

9 (Pause.)

10 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Was that your first
11 license, first captain license?

12 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, it was.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Did you have a mate's
14 license before that, or is this your first?

15 CAPTAIN SIOZON: That is my first one.

16 MR. TYRRELL: First license. Okay.

17 And how long have you worked for New York
18 Waterways?

19 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I started January of this
20 year.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

22 CAPTAIN SIOZON: As a deckhand.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And you worked as a
24 deckhand until --

25 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Roughly about January until

1 April. And then I got my promotion and made --

2 MR. TYRRELL: Promoted to, on May 2nd?

3 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Second week of May. My first
4 one was May 14th, as a solo captain.

5 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. You were promoted the
6 second week in May.

7 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Right.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And was, then you came
9 to work on the, you got this job permanently, on the
10 Manhattan, two months ago?

11 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Right. That was May until
12 about June 30th, I would say, about a month and maybe a
13 half.

14 MR. TYRRELL: May to June 30th.

15 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Of this year.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Of this year, on the Manhattan?

17 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

18 MR. TYRRELL: And then from June 30th until
19 two months ago, you were --

20 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Doing different runs.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Doing different things.

22 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Right.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Okay. What I would
24 like for you to do for me, if you can, is to, let's see
25 the fire, the fire happened on Friday night?

1 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, sir.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Friday night, okay. I wonder if
3 you can recreate for me, let's see, what I need to find
4 out is, like for the 72 hours before you came on duty,
5 what your work rest cycle was, you know, how many hours
6 sleep did you get? So, you, let's what is the best way
7 to do this. Would it be better to go backwards?

8 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Whatever.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. All right. Friday would
10 have been the 17th. Okay. You came on duty what time
11 on Friday?

12 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I normally relieve the
13 captain, morning captain at 2:20, 2:22.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Two, twenty, roughly.

15 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. What time did you get up
17 that day?

18 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I would say about nine
19 o'clock.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And what time did you go
21 to bed that night, the previous night?

22 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I would say about 12.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Midnight.

24 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

25 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So, that takes care of

1 that.

2 Now, you went to bed at midnight, got up a
3 nine, that is nine hours sleep, okay. On the day
4 before, the 18th(sic), would you have gotten to, what
5 time did you get up on the morning of the 18th(sic)?

6 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I would say probably about
7 seven, seven o'clock.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You say the 18th, do
10 you mean the day after or the day before?

11 MR. TYRRELL: I am sorry, it would have been
12 the 16th, wouldn't it? The 16th, I am sorry, the day
13 before that, would have been?

14 CAPTAIN SIOZON: You are talking about
15 Wednesday, right?

16 MR. TYRRELL: Yes.

17 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Okay. Right about the same
18 time as I normally do.

19 MR. TYRRELL: About nine o'clock.

20 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And you would then come
22 to work --

23 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Two, twenty.

24 MR. TYRRELL: Two, twenty.

25 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I would relieve the captain.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And you remember when
2 you would have gone to bed that previous night?

3 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Right about the same time,
4 11, 12, you know, because I leave the Manhattan and I
5 usually get home like, right about 11 o'clock after
6 work.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Would that same schedule
8 have been true for the day before that as well?

9 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, pretty much.

10 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And that is
11 approximately, there was nothing in those three days
12 that would have kept you up.

13 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Not really.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Would you say you got at
15 least eight hours sleep each night?

16 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Let's move onto the day
18 of the fire. What I would like you to do is starting
19 from the time that you arrived onboard to go to work
20 that day, just tell me what happened, what you can
21 recall, what you did, from the time that you got
22 onboard the vessel, until you got off the vessel.

23 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Okay. Normally, when I
24 relieve the captain, basically, I just continue running
25 the boat. And what I usually do is about 45 minutes

1 after I get onboard, I will ask one my steering
2 deckhands to take the wheel, because I just want to go
3 down and do a quick engine check. Usually I bled the
4 compressor, that is one of my sort of habit that I do,
5 I hold the compressor update and basically I go back to
6 the wheel and do runs. In rush hour, I always
7 emphasize to my deckhand to do engine checks. And
8 basically, just continue running the boat.

9 MR. TYRRELL: All right. Tell me what was your
10 first indication that there was a problem on the
11 vessel?

12 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Well, from Lincoln Harbor, we
13 take passengers, it was 8:45, out of Lincoln Harbor,
14 and we dropped the passengers off, I believe probably
15 like 8:50, the time. And we were suppose to leave at
16 8:52, which we departed on time. We had only eight
17 passengers out of New York. And I turned the boat,
18 undocked the boat, and I spin the boat out, check the
19 radar, and it seemed like everything was fair. There
20 was no traffic. So, I asked my deckhand, if you can
21 just grab the wheel, real quick, because I would like
22 to have my dinner. So, we were just, we just passed
23 Pier 76, and while I tried to get my food, I happened
24 to glance on the back, that is when I realized there
25 was smoke coming out from the port ventilation. And

1 right away, when I realized that, at the same time the
2 deckhand, junior deckhand was at the wheel, told me
3 that it seems like we are having problems in the
4 throttle. It seems like it is losing air or something.

5 So, I made, let me take over and I want you to go down
6 and see what the situation was. So, immediately he
7 went down, and I was at the wheel for roughly about two
8 minutes and the Midtown boat, which is the boat that we
9 have at 38th Street, at 6:09 by the way, I called him
10 up and I just told him, his name was Charles, I told
11 him, "Charles, be advised, it looks like we are having
12 problems here. There is smoke coming out from under,
13 from the ventilation, could you stand by?" And he did
14 reply, and that was the last radio contact I was able
15 to make, and immediately the radio shut down. And I
16 lost, I had time to put the boat back in neutral and I
17 lost steering.

18 I immediately and when my deckhand came back
19 and said it is pretty serious down there, and I was
20 like how serious is it? And he said, I don't know, I
21 can't tell but there is a lot of smoke coming out and
22 there are flames in the engine room. So, I immediately
23 told him, if you could stand by in the wheel house, I
24 would like to see what the situation was. And at the
25 same time I told him to make a call, since he has the

1 cell phone, call 911, and call everybody that you can
2 make contact with.

3 I went down and I realized that there was a
4 lot of smoke coming out from the engine room and I
5 assumed that, Coky or Carlos, his name, was using the
6 fire extinguisher, was spraying, so mainly I went back
7 up to the wheel house and I think right about at the
8 same time, he shut off the fuel supply valves, which is
9 right in the main tank. And there was no way I could
10 make a distress call from radio, so I just started
11 blowing the horn, like a distress call.

12 And then I told Felipe to go down and make
13 sure all the passengers are on the bow, crowd control.

14 Right about the same time, all the lights went out on
15 the boat.

16 And during that time, too, I shut off all the
17 breakers, especially the cabin, breakers and the wheel
18 house. And he went back up and he told me that there
19 were no lights and everything, it was just pitch black
20 down there. And for the second time, I told him, stand
21 by in the wheel house I want go down again, and double
22 check what the situation was. When I went down it is
23 like full of smoke, the whole, third deck was full of
24 smoke. And immediately, I told him, if you could grab
25 some life jackets and -- it was just pitch black and

1 those life jackets are behind, just right around the
2 engine room. And I just grabbed as much I could, life
3 jackets, because it was totally dark. And I brought
4 them to the bow, and I dropped it on the deck, and at
5 the same time I believe one of my deckhands, I just
6 can't remember who it was, started assisting some of
7 the passengers, donning their life jackets.

8 Then I went back up again, and during the
9 time Felipe was still on phone, again, so I started
10 blowing the horn for the second time. And after that,
11 immediately I (inaudible), so I decided to deploy a
12 life raft, right about that time. And one of the
13 passengers came up and offered, if he could help us
14 out, and at the same time he was complaining he doesn't
15 have a life jacket. And one of my deckhands offered
16 his basic relation device jacket we wear. And he gave
17 it to the passenger, and about the same time we started
18 to pulling the life raft down.

19 And then from there on, I went back down
20 because I was kind of worried, one of my deckhands was
21 still down there, and I tried to find him, because I
22 was real worried, because smoke was just tremendous.
23 And I started calling his name, calling his name. I
24 had my flashlight, and at the same time, I was having,
25 I was choking from the smoke, and thank God, he showed

1 up. He said I am here. So, I said, let's get the hell
2 out of here, go back to the bow and just take care of
3 the passengers. We are going to take the life raft
4 out.

5 And from there on we closed the door, the
6 main door, the main entrance door, and we started
7 bringing all the life rafts, we brought down three life
8 rafts, and from there we just waited for help. And we
9 heard the explosion, too, during that time, while we
10 were waiting. It was an explosion, the boat shook.
11 And one of the, two of the passengers for some reason
12 they just grabbed the life raft and they throw in the
13 water, so from there I just told them, listen, nobody
14 is going to jump from this boat. We are going to use
15 the rafts for the last resort, before we had to and I
16 brought the line, the life rafts in the water and I
17 tied it to the railings.

18 And basically after that, the other boat
19 showed up. Well, the fire boat around the area during
20 the time, plus the Celestial, one of the dinner boats,
21 all the time he was there, with his spotlight on, on
22 the bow. I think he was monitoring what is going on.

23 A few minutes later, one of our boats came
24 by, and picked us up. Well, first of all, we let all
25 the passengers get off first, then my crew and I was

1 the last one to get off.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. That is quite a story.
3 It must have been pretty exciting there for awhile.

4 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, it is just that it
5 happened so fast, that I can't believe that we were
6 able to deploy three life rafts in five minutes, maybe.
7 It was just incredible.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Tell me something about
9 the passengers. Were they, for instance, what was
10 their age mix? Were they all adults?

11 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Were, do you remember
13 how many male and how many female?

14 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I, there was seven males and
15 one female. And as far as I can remember, at least
16 four, or three of them were on their cell phones all of
17 the time, constantly. Probably were calling 911.

18 MR. TYRRELL: How, what was their demeanor, I
19 mean, how were they, were they like panicking?

20 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Surprisingly, not as I would
21 expect them to be. A lot of them were just asking what
22 is going on, what is the cause of the fire? And we
23 just sort of ignored the questions, just step back to
24 the side, please, because we are going back and forth.
25 And by the time we brought the life raft down, that is

1 when they were kind of worried. And I could tell from
2 their faces that they were like, this is serious. So,
3 I told, listen, don't, folks, the life raft is just the
4 last resort. We are not going to use this if we don't
5 have to. So, please just calm down. And in fact,
6 there were two, like I said, those two passengers, one
7 of them was about to jump off and a good thing my
8 deckhand was there to hold him up. In a few minutes,
9 the other boat came by.

10 MR. TYRRELL: I see. What was the name of the
11 other boat that came by?

12 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I believe it is the George
13 Washington.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. How did you transfer the
15 people from the Manhattan to the George Washington?

16 CAPTAIN SIOZON: What we normally do, as you
17 can see our boat, it is bow up situation, loading and
18 unloading passengers, so what he did was just bow up,
19 and we just loaded the people.

20 MR. TYRRELL: They walked directly from one to
21 the other?

22 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Right.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Is this something that
24 you guys would practice in any kind of a drill or is it
25 just something that you, from docking and undocking you

1 know how to do it.

2 CAPTAIN SIOZON: We just, we haven't done that
3 as a drill.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. During the fire, you
5 lost all electric power.

6 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. About what time was it,
8 do you recall?

9 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Like I said, we left on time,
10 which is 6:52, and I would say roughly about two or
11 three minutes after we departed, that is when we
12 realized there was smoke coming, that is when I
13 realized, I saw the smoke.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Can you tell me how much smoke
15 and where it was coming from?

16 CAPTAIN SIOZON: It was from the port
17 ventilation and it was a pretty good amount of smoke.
18 And it was bad. It was total black smoke coming out.

19 MR. TYRRELL: When you went below and looked,
20 was there any smoke coming directly into the passenger
21 main cabin?

22 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Well, from the engine room,
23 from the entrance of the engine room door, during the
24 time my deckhand named Carlos, was with the fire
25 extinguisher. And smoke was coming out.

1 MR. TYRRELL: His name is Carlos?

2 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

3 MR. TYRRELL: And he was spraying the fire
4 extinguisher into the engine room from --

5 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, but just on top, he
6 couldn't go down, I mean, you could see the flames
7 coming up from the stairways.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Oh, you could?

9 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes. And the smoke was just
10 a lot, and we just basically just sticking those fire
11 extinguishers --

12 MR. TYRRELL: Was it black smoke?

13 CAPTAIN SIOZON: For the most part, yes.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Did you smell anything
15 distinctive, I mean, could you, I mean, some people can
16 say, well, you know, it is not like an electrical fire?

17 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I think it was both, I think
18 it, electrical and some oil, something like that. The
19 smell right now on that boat, reminds me of everything.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

21 CAPTAIN SIOZON: It is just basically, it is
22 pretty much the same smell.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Now, the explosion that
24 you heard, that was, was that after you had all the
25 passengers up on the bow?

1 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Can you give me any idea of how
3 long after the fire started that the explosion
4 occurred?

5 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I will say about 10 minutes,
6 maybe.

7 MR. TYRRELL: About 10 minutes.

8 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And did you feel any
10 kind of impact, shudder or anything like that?

11 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Oh, yes, yes, the boat just
12 shook. And from there on, the passengers started
13 panicking. I mean, they were like totally worried
14 about the whole situation. In fact, I heard some guy,
15 some passenger making comment about the boat could
16 explode any time now.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Did you have any, any
18 difficulty during the emergency, when you had the
19 passengers out there, did you have any difficulty being
20 able to communicate with the passengers as far as being
21 loud enough to, so that they could hear what you were
22 saying?

23 CAPTAIN SIOZON: For the most part they were
24 very cooperative. Like I said, we just told them to
25 step to the side and most, almost all of them were on

1 the side. And the other thing is that we were trying
2 to bring the life raft down, some that stayed in the
3 middle of the part of the bow, and it was little tough
4 for us to move the life raft. And a few of them helped
5 us out, grab the life raft and move it to the side.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Did you mention, you mentioned
7 another vessel that was standing by, shining a light.

8 CAPTAIN SIOZON: The Celestial, yes.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Celestial?

10 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Celestial.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Is that operated by New York
12 Waterways?

13 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I believe it is on Spirit
14 Cruises, down by Chelsea Pier.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Steward Cruises.

16 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Spirit.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Spirit Cruises.

18 What do you think would have been, what do
19 you think it would have been like if you had had this
20 happened to you during rush hour with a full load of
21 passengers?

22 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Well, I guess, there would be
23 a whole different scenario there. The only thing you
24 could do for the passengers so they won't get the smoke
25 inhalation, is, the best thing to do is just send

1 everybody to the top deck, which is, well, there is
2 smoke coming out there, but at least the smoke is, it
3 is not as much as other, the interior deck.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Can you think of
5 anything now that this is all over with, and you have
6 had a little time to think about, is there anything
7 that you would say, gee, it would have been nice to
8 have X, I wish we had? Is there another, is there
9 something that, you know, would have made it a little
10 easier for you to handle the situation if you had had
11 it onboard the vessel?

12 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Well, if we did have a fire
13 alarm or a camera onboard, inside the engine room, it
14 might have helped.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Are you talking about a video
16 monitor type of thing?

17 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, right. And a fire
18 alarm maybe, and a halon system.

19 MR. TYRRELL: When you, were you injured at
20 all during the fire?

21 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I got a little bit of
22 scratches on my knees and, you know, when we tried to
23 get the life rafts out. Other than that, I was fine,
24 except for smoke inhalation.

25 MR. TYRRELL: And were you examined by some

1 medical practitioner afterwards?

2 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, immediately, we were
3 brought to an ambulance and, well, first we were on the
4 dock, and the cops were asking us, if everything is all
5 right. And they suggested we should get a smoke
6 inhalation -- and which we did. From there on, we went
7 to the ambulance, and they brought us to Palisades
8 Hospital.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Palisades Hospital.

10 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. How long were you there?

12 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I would say roughly about
13 three, three hours, maybe.

14 MR. TYRRELL: And they examined you and then
15 released you?

16 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, at the same time took
17 blood test and I believe they took a urine sample, too.

18 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Were the passengers with
19 you, too, were they taken to the hospital at the same
20 time?

21 CAPTAIN SIOZON: There was just two
22 passengers, right away I forgot to mention that the
23 vessel that had rescued us, the George Washington, on
24 the way back to, from, I think we were rescued just a
25 little bit west of Chelsea Pier, on the way back I

1 asked my passengers three times, all of them, is
2 everything all right, do you guys need medical
3 attention, if you do we have ambulances waiting and
4 they refused, all of them. And I went back up to the
5 wheel house and with the other Captain, I think about
6 two minutes later, I just want to make sure that
7 everything, if they really needed medical attention, I
8 asked them three times and finally two of them told me
9 that they do have a history of asthma. And I told
10 them like they should have a medical member check up
11 and those were the two passengers that both went to the
12 hospital.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. They had history of
14 asthma.

15 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes. And the funny part was
16 a few of the passengers just told us like, why don't
17 you just drop us back at Lincoln Harbor. They just
18 want to go home, I guess.

19 MR. TYRRELL: So, the George Washington took
20 you where?

21 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Back to Port Imperial.

22 MR. TYRRELL: Port Imperial. Okay. And how
23 many ambulances were waiting for you when you got
24 there?

25 CAPTAIN SIOZON: As far as I can remember,

1 probably two ambulances.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Going back to before the
3 fire, you were eating your dinner. Where were you
4 doing that?

5 CAPTAIN SIOZON: On the chart table, just
6 right behind the wheel.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. In the pilot house.

8 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Right. In fact, my food is
9 still up there. I just started eating basically about
10 a minute or so. That was the thing that sacred me,
11 because I almost choked when I saw the fire, food
12 spilled out of my mouth.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So, when you turned the
14 wheel over to the deckhand, you never left the pilot
15 house.

16 CAPTAIN SIOZON: No.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. All right.

18 Was there any, okay, how long had it been
19 since you had turned it over to the deckhand to the
20 time that he reported he was having problems, or that
21 you saw the smoke, whichever happened first?

22 CAPTAIN SIOZON: It happened almost right
23 about the same time. When he was at the wheel and
24 right about the same time I realized there was smoke
25 coming out.

1 MR. TYRRELL: You had just started to eat?

2 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, I just started to eat
3 and I happened to look up and smoke was coming out.
4 And right about the same time, he said, Duke, there is
5 something not going right here. It seems like we were
6 having problems, you know, let me take over here and go
7 down to the engine room and it looks like we are having
8 smoke from the ventilation.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Okay. In the last 30
10 days have you had any significant, anything that you
11 would say, any significant engineering problems on the
12 vessel?

13 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Not as far as I can remember.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. When you were, did you
15 hear anything when you were in the pilot house, did you
16 hear or feel anything that was a little bit out of the
17 ordinary at any time just before you saw the smoke?

18 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Nothing.

19 MR. TYRRELL: Did any of the passengers report
20 anything to you while you were talking to them, did
21 they say, I knew something was happening because I
22 heard this or I saw that?

23 CAPTAIN SIOZON: No, nothing.

24 MR. TYRRELL: Nothing.

25 What, maybe something will occur to me if I

1 change subject here. What is your normal work
2 schedule, you know, how many days do you work and how
3 many days are you off?

4 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Basically I work, my schedule
5 is Monday through Friday. And I basically start like
6 2:20 and the last run out of Lincoln Harbor was 9:45.
7 By the time we tie the boat up, it is about 10:05.
8 What I normally do is I will wait for the Midtown boat
9 to, from Port Imperial back to New York, that is where
10 I live. I just take the bus.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And so, you work every
12 week?

13 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, yes.

14 MR. TYRRELL: All right. And your deckhands,
15 do they work the same schedule? Do you have the same
16 people all of the time?

17 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Well, we just started this
18 bid basically. We had to bid like pretty much every
19 two months, right. And before this bid started up, I
20 was doing Lincoln Harbor. And when the new bid came
21 up, I stated that run, this run --

22 MR. TYRRELL: You had these deckhands for one
23 week before the fire basically?

24 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

25 MR. TYRRELL: Five days, four or five days.

1 Something like that.

2 Had you worked with them before?

3 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, I did.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Do you have any, does
5 the captain get to select the deckhands that work for
6 them, or is that, they are just assigned to your boat?

7 CAPTAIN SIOZON: It is based on bidding,
8 seniority, whoever wants that run, the senior guy gets
9 it.

10 MR. TYRRELL: Are these two deckhands well
11 qualified, experienced?

12 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, they are.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And as far as you know
14 there were no, no problems with any of the engineering
15 equipment onboard the vessel?

16 CAPTAIN SIOZON: No.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The next question I
18 would ask is personal in nature. If there is something
19 you don't feel comfortable talking about right now
20 (inaudible) what I am trying to identify was there any
21 significant emotional at home or in your personal life
22 (inaudible)

23 CAPTAIN SIOZON: No.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Has anything happened,
25 a family member sick (inaudible)

1 CAPTAIN SIOZON: No, not really, no.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. The life
3 jackets, all of the life jackets are stowed in that
4 back (inaudible) You sent the crew members back to get
5 the life jackets?

6 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Well, I did. I personally
7 went back there and at the same time, like I said, my
8 senior deckhand was up in the wheel house, making
9 calls. And I grabbed some of the life jackets and I
10 believe Carlos did, too.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you grab enough
12 life jackets for everyone? There were eight
13 passengers, three crewmen.

14 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And the answer to that
16 (inaudible) were there flames coming out of that
17 (inaudible)

18 CAPTAIN SIOZON: The entrance.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think that would be
20 pretty difficult.

21 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes. Oh, yeah, like I said,
22 I was just walking blindly with a flashlight and I
23 think that this building was just about two, three feet
24 with all the smoke and during that time I was having a
25 hard time breathing and I just grabbed as many as I

1 could, the life jackets. I don't know how many life
2 jackets I was able to grab. And I just basically, and
3 I went back to the wheel house and my deckhand did help
4 with the life jackets.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (inaudible) did you put
6 on a life jacket, yourself?

7 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I didn't get a chance to,
8 because I was just like more concerned about passengers
9 and the crew. All the time I didn't have a life
10 jacket.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You weren't sure at
12 this point that you had enough adequate life jackets?
13 If the decision was made to abandon ship, you don't
14 know how many life jackets there were, did you?

15 CAPTAIN SIOZON: I grabbed at least four, five
16 life jackets, you know, and I believe one of my
17 deckhand did, too, Carlos. And for the most part, all
18 of the passengers got the life jacket except for one,
19 which that was the gentleman who tried to offer us the
20 help. And my deckhand did offer his life vest,
21 flotation, float coat to him.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, there was only one
23 passenger that didn't get a life jacket.

24 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And he was the guy that

1 assisted with the life boats and your crewman offered
2 him his life jacket.

3 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just, you worked with
5 this crew, on this particular vessel for one week.

6 CAPTAIN SIOZON: That was the first week we
7 started working together.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But, you worked with
9 these guys before on different shifts and different --

10 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. The assessment
12 sheets that you filled out after you did a fire drill.

13 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did anyone ever oversee
15 you conduct a fire drill? Anyone from Management in
16 the company, did they ever watch you conduct a fire
17 drill, and maybe give you some feedback on it?

18 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Basically, we do the fire
19 drills, just me and the crew.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What was the extent of
21 the comments, suggestions, recommendations that went
22 and forth, I mean, just describe for me, you got this
23 sheet that says, look, you need to do the fire drill by
24 a certain date, you got the sheet, just tell me what
25 happens from there?

1 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Prior to that last fire drill
2 that I had -- I believe we did have, you know, have a
3 fire hose on the top deck, and I made a comment and
4 immediately they supplied us one. And basically, all
5 the pumps were working fine. There was considerable
6 amount of water coming out from the hose to the --
7 Everything was just normal, I mean.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can you walk me through
9 a normal drill? I mean, you said you check pumps,
10 check the hoses.

11 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just tell me whatever
13 you do?

14 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Okay. It really depends on
15 where the scenario is, sort of, like where the fire is.
16 For the most part, we also send the deckhand to close
17 the ventilation, say it is an engine room fire and it
18 is very important to fuel shut off valve. Drop the
19 fire extinguishers and basically just attach all the
20 hoses from the fire pump and open all the, the valves
21 that need to be open and do the fire drill. And we
22 normally do it underway, like before the rush hour
23 starts.

24 MR. TYRRELL: Are there passengers onboard at
25 that time?

1 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, yes, a few, about 10,
2 15. Usually we start the fire drill like about, I
3 start at 2:20, right about 3:30.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Do you make an announcement to
5 the passengers so that they don't get all excited?

6 CAPTAIN SIOZON: No, no. They know it is a
7 drill, I mean.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I should know the
9 answer to this answer (inaudible) when you applied for
10 a license, first time license, did you have to provide
11 any type of documentation to the Coast Guard that you
12 had participated or completed a formal firefighting
13 training? Or was there a written exam with the fire
14 fighting part?

15 CAPTAIN SIOZON: It was just a written exam
16 for my AB. I don't have a formal firefighting
17 training.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, (inaudible)

19 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

20 MR. TYRRELL: You don't have a backup radio,
21 battery powered VHF radio, is that correct?

22 CAPTAIN SIOZON: No.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Do you think that would
24 have been something that might be a good idea to have?

25 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Absolutely.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Can you give me a quick rundown
2 of what equipment is in the pilot house?

3 CAPTAIN SIOZON: We do have two fire
4 extinguishers. There is one, small one, we have, plus
5 the larger one, which is right behind and we have a
6 fire ax. And that is just about it in the wheel house
7 except for, well, right behind the pilot house, there
8 is a fire hose there, too.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Do you know if there are any
10 fire extinguishers in the engine room or near the
11 engine room?

12 CAPTAIN SIOZON: There is one.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Where --

14 CAPTAIN SIOZON: There is one right in the
15 entrance to the engine room.

16 MR. TYRRELL: All right.

17 CAPTAIN SIOZON: And there is another one on
18 the stern.

19 MR. TYRRELL: On the stern.

20 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. The door to the engine
22 room, the companion way where you enter the engine
23 room, is that normally closed when you are underway?

24 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes, it is, it should be
25 closed all the time.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Is it locked?

2 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Well, not total lock. We do
3 have a --

4 MR. TYRRELL: Latch?

5 CAPTAIN SIOZON: A latch.

6 MR. TYRRELL: When, okay.

7 CAPTAIN SIOZON: And during that time, when we
8 realized there was smoke coming out from the
9 ventilation right away, one of my, Carlos was
10 downstairs on the main deck with the passengers, and he
11 didn't notice any smoke coming out.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. The other deckhand was in
13 the --

14 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Pilot house.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Pilot house with you.

16 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Yes.

17 MR. TYRRELL: He was steering. Okay.

18 Is there anything, anything else about this
19 incident that you would like to tell us that we haven't
20 gotten to yet?

21 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Like I said, everything was
22 just normal on that boat. And I loved that boat. I
23 mean, that is the only reason I stayed in the run,
24 because the run, I got of got kind of used to it, with
25 the boat, you know. It feels like home. Everyday you

1 have got the same boat pretty much.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Thank you very much, Captain. We
3 appreciate it.

4 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Thank you.

5 MR. TYRRELL: If you think of something, I
6 would like to check with you maybe in a week or two, if
7 it is all right, give you a call and maybe you will
8 think of something else.

9 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Think something else about
10 what?

11 MR. TYRRELL: Well, I don't know.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (inaudible)

13 MR. TYRRELL: Yeah, usually, usually people
14 remember things after a little time has passed.

15 CAPTAIN SIOZON: No problem.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Do you have a telephone number
17 where I could reach you?

18 CAPTAIN SIOZON: Sure.

19 MR. TYRRELL: What would it be?

20 CAPTAIN SIOZON: It is [REDACTED]

21 MR. TYRRELL: [REDACTED].

22 CAPTAIN SIOZON: And you could also use the
23 other phone that we have, I have in my house, [REDACTED].

24 MR. TYRRELL: [REDACTED].

25 CAPTAIN SIOZON: [REDACTED] t.

1 MR. TYRRELL: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. What would be,
2 what time should I call, if I call you?

3 CAPTAIN SIOZON: You can call any time and
4 leave message. If I am still on this schedule, then
5 basically call me in the morning time.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Say again?

7 CAPTAIN SIOZON: In the morning time.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Morning.

9 CAPTAIN SIOZON: In the afternoon I do my
10 runs.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Well, thank you very
12 much.

13 CAPTAIN SIOZON: You are welcome.

14 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)